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***CARDIN, MIKULSKI ANNOUNCE RELEASE OF \$10
MILLION IN FEDERAL DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS TO
HELP MARYLAND'S WATERMEN***

NOAA approves Maryland's plans for funds

WASHINGTON,— U.S. Senators Benjamin L. Cardin and Barbara A. Mikulski (both D-Md.) today announced the release of \$10 million in federal disaster relief funds to help Maryland's watermen and to protect the viability of local businesses that rely on blue crabs, which have faced economic hardships due to years of declining blue crab stock.

The Department of Commerce approved \$10 million in disaster relief funds in November 2009. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has now approved the state's relief plan, thereby releasing the funds and making them immediately available to help watermen. Working with her Team Maryland colleagues, Senator Mikulski, Chairwoman of the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee, fought to include the disaster relief funding in the federal checkbook.

Senator Cardin said, "Maryland watermen are in desperate need of these emergency assistance funds. The blue crab population has declined by 70 percent since the 1990s, seriously affecting the Bay ecosystem and undermining the economy of Maryland. This emergency funding will help ensure the survival of Maryland's crabbing industry and will lead to improved management to help rejuvenate the blue crab population."

"Last May, I stood with Maryland's watermen and promised to stand up for them as they face a potential disaster to their way of life," said Senator Mikulski, Chairwoman of the Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee. "Now these funds will help soften the blow of years of shrinking crab harvests and provide opportunities to the watermen who have been affected by it. I will continue to lead Team Maryland in our efforts to protect the Bay and those whose livelihoods depend on it."

The disaster relief funds will be used for programs to provide watermen with work opportunities while at the same time restoring crab stocks through aquaculture, habitat restoration, and monitoring and research. Funding also will be used to restructure the fishery and improve its management to provide longer term stability, including for license buy-backs.

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